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A SERMON

PREACHED IN

THE CATHEDRAL CHURCH OF HEREFORD

AT THE MEETING

OF THE THREE CHOIRS OF

WORCESTER HEREFORD AND GLOUCESTER

SEPTEMBER IX. MDCCLXXXIX.

BY JOHN NAPLETON, D.D. CANON RESIDENTIARY OF HEREFORD, CHAPLAIN TO THE LORD BISHOP OF HEREFORD, LATE FELLOW OF BRASEN NOSE COLLEGE OXFORD.

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M DCC LXXXIX.

IMPRIMATUR

J. COOKE, VICE-CAN. OXON.

C. C. C.
NOV. XV. MDCCLXXXIX.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

THE LORD VISCOUNT MALDEN

TO THE RIGHT REVEREND

THE LORD BISHOP OF HEREFORD

STEWARDS

AND TO THE OTHER FRIENDS

OF THIS CHARITY

THIS SERMON

PUBLISHED AT THEIR REQUEST

IS MOST HUMBLY INSCRIBED.

BRITISH MUSEUM

GALAT. VI. IX, X.

AND LET US NOT BE WEARY IN WELL DOING; FOR IN DUE SEASON WE SHALL REAP, IF WE FAINT NOT.

AS WE HAVE THEREFORE OPPORTUNITY, LET US DO GOOD UNTO ALL MEN; ESPECIALLY UNTO THEM WHO ARE OF THE HOUSEHOLD OF FAITH.

IT is the incommunicable attribute of the Supreme Creator to be ſufficient to his own exiſtence and happineſs. As he is all-perfect in himſelf, it is impoſſible that he ſhould want any aſſiſtance from without; as he is the principle and firſt cauſe of all things, it is equally impoſſible that he ſhould receive it. On the contrary, the various orders of Created beings, as they were made "by the "word of his power,[a]" and are ſuſtained by his good providence, muſt conſtantly look up to him for the ſupport and improvement of their natures. The moſt exalted rank of An-

[a] Heb. 1. 3.

gels, and the loweſt claſs of intellectual beings, feel themſelves equally indebted to his paternal goodneſs, for original exiſtence, for preſervation, and for happineſs. To each of them he communicates his favours, in ſuch Kinds and Meaſures, as are agreeable to his infinite wiſdom, and ſuitable to their ſtation in his family. With his diſpenſations to rational beings other than ourſelves, we are little acquainted: we know however, that there are among them orders, in ſituation and endowments, ſuperior to us; and diſtinguiſhed alſo, either by nature or office, from each other. In the diſtribution of his favours to his creatures, as he ſelects ſuch Kinds and Meaſures, ſo alſo does he uſe ſuch Methods and Inſtruments, as are conformable to "the "counſel of his will."[b] To mankind he generally diſpenſes his bounty by Stated and Permanent means. Thus, he provides for the preſervation of their bodies, by the ordinary productions of nature, and the regular procedure of the material world: he ſendeth the rain at certain ſeaſons, "and the ſun know-"eth his going down."[c] He promotes the welfare of their ſouls, he leads them to the knowledge and performance of duty, by the guidance of reaſon, and the light of a ſtand-

[b] Eph. 1. 11. [c] Pſ. 104. 19.

ing revelation. Sometimes however he beſtows his bleſſings, temporal and ſpiritual, by methods Special and Extraordinary. Thus, has he upon great occaſions ſuſtained his people "by bread from heaven,[d]" and "turned "the flint ſtone into a ſpringing well.[e]" He has inſtructed them by particular manifeſtations of his will, and moved them to faith and obedience by ſigns and wonders: "the ſun" hath "ſtood ſtill in the midſt of heaven:[f]" the elements have "forgotten their nature;[g]" the fire hath loſt its inherent virtues,[h] and the waters of the ocean have made a way for his ſervants.[i] In ſome reſpects, he promotes our well being, whether temporal or ſpiritual, by exertions of his power and wiſdom Immediate, without any known Inſtrument or agent ſubordinate. Thus, by his univerſal preſence "he holdeth our ſoul in life;[k]" "in "him we move and have our being:[l]" he protecteth us by the unwearied guardianſhip of his providence. By his Spirit he aids our underſtandings in the purſuit of truth; and influences our wills and affections to the practice of virtue. In other reſpects, he is pleaſed to ſupport and guide us, to advance our preſent and future welfare, by the Intermedia e

[d] Pſ. 105. 40. [e] Pſ. 114. 8. [f] Joſh. 10. 13. [g] Wiſd. 19. 18, 20. [h] Dan. 3. 27. [i] Ex. 14. 22. [k] Pſ. 66. 9. [l] Acts 17. 28.

operation and Miniſtry of his creatures. Thus, for our temporal well being, he hath given us dominion over the viſible world; he hath granted us every fruit of the earth, "the "beaſts of the field, the fowls of the air, and "whatſoever walketh through the paths of "the ſeas:[m]" he hath made them all ſubſervient to our preſervation and enjoyment. For our eternal intereſts, perhaps alſo for our temporal; even thoſe holy and immaculate ſpirits which are about his throne, whoſe whole duty and happineſs might have been conceived to conſiſt in the contemplation and worſhip of their Creator, are made by him the willing inſtruments of human good: for "they are all," in ſome way, to us unknown, "miniſtering ſpirits, ſent forth to "miniſter for the heirs of ſalvation.[n]"

But he has thought fit more eſpecially, in the promotion of human happineſs, to make uſe of the miniſtry of MAN. He has been pleaſed to deſign each individual, in his place and order, to be the friend of his neighbour, and a benefactor to the general ſociety of mankind. He has ordained us all to be to each other the diſpenſers of His favours; whether they have relation only to the preſent life, or to the future alſo. He has

[m] Pſ. 8. 7, 8. [n] Heb. 1. 14.

eſtabliſhed this reciprocal communication and dependence, in the Conſtitution of Human Nature, and in the Order of the World. Man is created with affections and wants, which impel him to ſociety; he looks for happineſs in the converſation and aſſiſtance of his own ſpecies; for his attainment of it he muſt depend on mutual kindneſs and condeſcenſion. His happineſs muſt correſpond with his compound nature: one part of which ſeeks Knowledge, as its proper gratification, and as the rule of life; the other requires, Neceſſaries for its exiſtence, and Conveniences for its comfort. With reſpect to Knowledge, if each individual were to derive it from his own invention and ſolitary ſtudies, it is eaſy to conceive how ſcanty would be the ſum. With the treaſures of preceding ages and the acquirements of the preſent, with all the advantages of reading and converſation, how ſmall is the Univerſal ſtock of ſcience, compared with the objects of contemplation not yet at all, or imperfectly, explored? how much ſmaller the poſſeſſion of each Individual in proportion to the general fund? If then this fair ſtructure of human knowledge has been raiſed no higher by the accumulated ingenuity, and ſucceſſive induſtry, of near ſix thouſand years; if

of this, ſo few have been led up to ſurvey the ſummit, or even reached the inferior ſtages; what would have been the caſe, if each individual had built upon his own foundation, and reſted upon his own genius and activity, unaſſiſted by the preparatory works of preceding ages, or the concurrent labours of his own? What is thus true of Science, is equally evident concerning the Arts, which ſerve to the accommodation and ornament of human life. If the firſt ſketch or element were loſt with the inventor, there would be no progreſs; and perfection would be impoſſible: a canoe would never grow into a ſhip, or a hut into a palace. Nor would it conſiderably advance any work of art, to tranſmit the invention and gradual improvement from age to age, if every living generation did not unite their talents in the execution; which depending eſſentially on a union of operation, as well for obtaining the materials as for preparing and combining them, the unconnected labours of millions would not afford a production of excellence or magnitude within the life of man. What has been ſaid of knowledge in general, holds ſtill more ſtrongly concerning Religious knowledge; which reſpects the nature of God, and the reverence due to him; the obligations

and meaſures of moral duty; the proſpects of a future ſtate; the rewards of virtue, and the puniſhments of vice. Theſe important inquiries have difficulties peculiar to themſelves. Other knowledge has regard to objects of ſenſe, and to the world in which we live; religious knowledge is converſant with things unſeen, and with a world of which we have no experience: beſides that the doctrines which it teaches, and the leſſons which it inculcates, being oppoſed in many points by the current of our paſſions, do not always command an impartial attention. In the inveſtigation of truths thus ſublime and abſtracted, not eaſy to be digeſted into undiſputed maxims and efficacious rules of moral conduct, important in their conſequences to every period of our being, the Greater Neceſſity of mutual aid is abundantly evident; affording the moſt ample conviction, that we are in theſe, above all, attainments, by the condition of our nature, the Inſtructors and Diſciples of each other. The hiſtory of mankind has proved, that even this combination of human induſtry, in the purſuit and application of religious knowledge, was greatly inſufficient to the end propoſed. God has therefore been pleaſed, in "his own times and manners," to ſupply the defect by ſupernatural communications.

And in the conveyance and diſtribution of theſe gracions inſtructions, as well as in the information derived from our natural faculties, he hath thought fit to appoint us to be auxiliaries to each other; and to employ, in this heavenly errand, the miniſtry of Man. He hath indeed upon ſome great occaſions ſent "the Angels of his preſence[o]" to inſtruct, admoniſh, and correct, us: but his more uſual meſſengers have been "men, of "like paſſions" and infirmities "with our-"ſelves;[p]" "preachers of" truth and "righte-"ouſneſs,[q]" patriarchs, prophets, and apoſtles. We know who was the diſpenſer of the Jewiſh revelation: and even that Greater Prophet, whom He repreſented and foretold, was to be "raiſed up from among his bre-"thren:[r]" that Divine Perſon, when he "came down from heaven,[s]" "took not on "him the nature of Angels,[t] but became the "Son of Man.[s]" His doctrines and precepts he delivered to his diſciples, men, choſen by him to be witneſſes of his miracles, and teachers of his religion. After them, he left his goſpel to be propagated by human miniſtration: to be preſerved, explained, and recommended, under the ſuperintendence of

[o] Iſ. 63. 9. [p] Acts 14. 15. [q] 2 Pet. 2. 5.
[r] Deut. 18. 15. [s] John 3. 13. [t] Heb. 2. 16.

his government and the influence of his Spirit, by human reaſon and learning; by the piety and induſtry of individuals; and by the wiſdom of civil governments.

The uſe which I would make of theſe reflections is this. They ſhew it to be the deſign of God, evidenced by the conſtitution of things, by the ordinary courſe of his providence, and by the ſpecial diſpenſations of his grace, that, as we derive all our bleſſings temporal and ſpiritual from his eſſential goodneſs and covenanted mercies, ſo we ſhould receive them, in a great proportion, through the hands of each other: that ſo, the wants of ſome men may exerciſe the virtues of the reſt: that your humanity and charity, for example, may add to the happineſs of one, may relieve the miſery of a ſecond, may inſtruct the ignorance of a third, and reform the manners of a fourth: that they whoſe welfare you thus promote may, in return, give occaſion to improve your goodneſs, to heighten your preſent ſatisfaction, and to increaſe your future reward. Thus a reciprocal communication of good becomes a continual accumulation of it; enlarging the ſum of temporal comfort, of moral perfection, and of everlaſting happineſs.

BENEFICENCE, like every other virtue, is, in its firſt aim and wiſhes, univerſal and perpetual; extending itſelf, like its divine pattern, to every place and time. But the virtue of a Creature is limited by its nature, and ſituation: and the virtue of a degenerate creature, like ourſelves, is further reſtrained by infirmities moral and natural. With good habitual intentions, we are often remiſs and indolent in carrying them into execution: with preſent inclination, we often want ability, or opportunity: actual exertions, ſincere and powerful, are frequently confined within a ſmall circle. The Apoſtle gives us a rule adapted to all theſe limitations and obſtructions. With reſpect to natural impediments, ariſing from univerſal imperfection, particular ſituation, or perſonal diſability; "as we have "opportunity," or capacity, "let us do good "unto all men;" 'in whatever ſphere we are placed, and whatever be our influence in it, let our exertions reach to its utmoſt boundary.' In oppoſition to moral hinderances, ariſing from our own particular infirmity or fault; "let us not be weary in well doing;" 'let our activity be uninterrupted and continual; like the emanations of the ſun, which enlightens and cheriſhes every part and corner of the ſyſtem to which he has relation, in due

proportion and perpetual ſucceſſion.' And as our moſt diligent exertions, ſubject as they are to theſe impediments, muſt be reſtrained, not in their degree only, but alſo as to their objects, this limitation impoſes ſome preference in the choice; and the Apoſtle marks out one in particular: "eſpecially unto them "who are of the houſehold of faith," "the "family and ſervants of Chriſt." In the days of the Apoſtle, when the Profeſſors of the Goſpel were unſettled and perſecuted, the inconveniences which their religious principles brought upon them from others, equitably demanded a ſtricter union and co-operation among themſelves. Happily, the force of this argument is much abated in later times. But the Chriſtian Religion, however clear in in its evidences, in its doctrines reaſonable, in its precepts beneficial, in its promiſes encouraging, in its whole genius and tendency conciliating and friendly to all mankind, will nevertheleſs have its enemies in every age. Nothing is ſo manifeſtly true, as to approve itſelf to every underſtanding; nothing ſo amiable, as to recommend itſelf to every heart. This diverſity of ſentiment is to be expected in a ſtate of imperfection; wherein there is much of intellectual error and moral depravity. The Diſciple of Chriſt will there-

fore ſay to the Unbeliever, with the warmth and ſincerity of the Apoſtle, "I would to "God thou wert ſuch as I am, except[u]" my faults and infirmities. He will invite him earneſtly "to the knowledge of the truth,[w]" to the practice of good, and to the enjoyment of happineſs. If he fail to "perſuade him "to become a Chriſtian,[u]" he will continue to treat him with the affection due to a partaker of one common nature, and a child of the ſame Univerſal Parent. But ſtill, to his Believing brethren he is attached by ſtronger ties. As filial or parental affection, conjugal love, or friendſhip, far from excluding or abating univerſal philanthropy, is that very ſentiment, improved and ſtrengthened by the ſpecial dictate of nature, and by habits of eſteem and gratitude; ſo is that charity[x] which the Chriſtian feels towards all men, ſublimed into that more intenſe affection[x] which he bears for them, who are diſciples of the ſame Divine Maſter: who walk by the ſame heavenly light, under the ſame unfailing guidance and aſſiſtance, with the ſame clear and attractive proſpects: who are aſſociated with him in a league moſt honourable, for the profeſſion and propagation of truths,

[u] Acts 26. 29, 28. [w] 1 Tim. 2. 4.
[x] Τῃ φιλαδελφιᾳ εις αλληλους φιλοστοργοι. Rom. 12. 10.

highly declaratory of the divine goodneſs, and intereſting to human happineſs; for the improvement and increaſe of moral virtue; for the culture of every diſpoſition, which can contribute to private ſatisfaction and public peace, to the imperfect comforts of this tranſient ſtate, to the ſubſtantial pleaſures of eternity. To this "houſehold of faith," to this widely extended family, however diſperſed, or diſtreſſed, or even corrupted, in every climate, and in every communion, he cannot forget the relation which he bears. He will pray for them, according to their ſituation and neceſſities: for the continuance and advancement of their proſperity, temporal and ſpiritual; or, for their deliverance from civil oppreſſion, and reformation in doctrine and manners. But if this religious connection be drawn ſtill cloſer by local ſituation and appropriate circumſtances; if his chriſtian brethren be, alſo, natives of the ſame country, citizens of the ſame ſtate, members of the ſame church; as this gradual approximation will warm his affections, and highten his inclinations to beneficence, ſo will it alſo ſtrengthen his obligations, call out his virtuous principle into action, and plainly point out the object. For how will you ſhew your love to the general ſociety of mankind, unleſs

by your active benevolence to thoſe ſeveral parts of it to which you have a nearer relation? the nations with which you have intercourſe, your country, your acquaintance, your friends, your family? In like manner, how will you "do good to the houſehold of "faith," to the Catholic Church of Chriſt, unleſs by your beneficence to each ſeparate portion of it, whoſe intereſts and wants are known to you; which lies within the reach of your influence; which is placed by Providence under your immediate protection; and looks up to you as the natural guardians of its orphan ſtate?

THEY to whom we have devoted the beneficence of this day, unite in themſelves all theſe ſpecial claims to our regard. They are diſtreſſed branches of the family of Chriſt. They are natives of our country; ſubjects of our civil government; members of our national communion. But they have yet a ſtronger, and more affecting, plea. They are the relicts and repreſentatives of men, who have been placed by the laws of this kingdom in an office intimately connected with public order, with private happineſs, with the comfortable proſpects of a future ſtate. For no one will deny that true Religion leads directly to

theſe ends. Now the belief, and right apprehenſion, and practice, of Religion, though they muſt ultimately flow from the conviction and inclination of every man's own heart, yet receive conſiderable influence from the exertions of its Miniſters: from their learning and ſincerity in ſtating its evidences and doctrines; from their paſtoral diligence and perſonal example in recommending its duties. We ſee then the uſe and importance of a National Clergy, placed in ſituations fitted to call forth theſe qualities, and anſwer theſe purpoſes. If one of this order be appointed in every ſmaller diſtrict, who ſhall publicly adminiſter the offices, deliver the doctrines, and inculcate the duties, of Religion; who ſhall diſpenſe to his neighbours private inſtruction and exhortation; guide them by the example of himſelf and his family; train up their children in the knowledge of the truth; aſſiſt them in their temporal concerns, as ſituation or occaſion may ſuggeſt, by counſel, influence, or liberality; the almoner of the rich; the protector of the poor; the friend of all; what inſtitution can be conceived, more ſubſervient to every end of civil ſociety, or more friendly to the deareſt intereſts of mankind? It is probable, that men engaged in a profeſſion which leads habitually to ſerious conſideration, and

preſents to the mind continually the precepts and ſanctions of the chriſtian law, will diſcharge theſe important duties with anxious diligence. It is the more probable, when they ſee, among them, a good example, in the place where it is moſt becoming, and moſt perſuaſive. And they may truſt, under the bleſſing of Providence, in the good ſenſe and virtue of this chriſtian nation, that they will never ceaſe to be ſupported and reſpected, while they continue to anſwer the ends of their inſtitution; while they ſtudy to recommend Religion to the underſtandings and affections of mankind, and to draw them to their final and everlaſting good.

And, when We behold this Ancient Temple riſing again out of its ruins, not only through the bounty and activity of Prelates and other Clergy, but alſo under the munificent patronage of the greateſt part of the Nobility and Gentry of this Dioceſe; as we ſee, demonſtrated in this pious procedure, a reverence for the Supreme Inviſible Being to whom this houſe is dedicated, a veneration for the Chriſtian Faith and Worſhip, and for thoſe Sacred Truths which, we truſt, will ever be ſet forth in it with zeal, and knowledge, and fidelity; ſo do we infer their unabated affection

to the Church Eſtabliſhed: and we reaſonably conclude, that they deem This branch of its conſtitution conducive, in its place and proportion, to the advancement of Religion and the Public Good. This general concurrence in a work of Chriſtian Piety, while it does honour to the preſent generation, opens to us a pleaſing proſpect of future ages. As the Goſpel of Chriſt, prepared in the counſels of God and gradually diſcovered to mankind from the beginning, has now enlightened the world for near eighteen centuries, and will aſſuredly continue in it to the end of time; ſo we humbly truſt, that, by the goodneſs of Providence, it may flouriſh in This Country, in truth and purity, beyond the utmoſt duration perhaps of this periſhable building, and may remain "an everlaſting poſſeſſion," far ſurpaſſing all earthly bleſſings, to our lateſt poſterity.

Nor is it a leſs honourable or deciſive proof, though not a new one, of our affection to the Chriſtian Religion, and of our wiſhes for the perpetuity of its faith and worſhip, that we are here once more aſſembled, in purſuance of a league of charity which has long ſubſiſted between the three neighbouring Dioceſes, as Guardians of the Orphan Families

of its Miniſters Deceaſed. It has been the uſage of almoſt every country and every age, to pay ſome poſthumous honours to citizens, who have devoted their lives to the public ſervice. The practice flows from a ſentiment of natural juſtice and ſound policy; which, while it rewards, in the only way poſſible, the merits of the deceaſed, ſtimulates, in a manner moſt forcible, the virtues of the ſurviving. This candid and grateful tribute has, at different places and periods, been diſpenſed to the memory of the Departed and to their Families, in various methods; by monimental pillars, by panegyrical orations, by titles of honour, by lands and ſeignories. The Soldier, the Stateſman and Legiſlator, the Diſtributor of Public Juſtice, have ſometimes left little to their friends and relatives, but the fame of their virtues and the ſplendor of their names; relying on the equity and liberality of their country, for ſuch decent ſupport or honourable eſtabliſhment, as ſhould be thought proportioned to their ſituation and ſervices. The Miniſter of the Goſpel walks not in the path of glory, nor in the way which leads to riches and hereditary honours: he therefore bequeathes not to his children large reverſionary claims and high expectations. If he live to ſee them provided

with a competent ſubſiſtence, uſeful to themſelves and to ſociety in ſome civil employment, or in the miniſtration to which he has been himſelf devoted, he is thankful: if the providence of God diſpoſe it otherwiſe, he leaves them with confidence, under his gracious ſuperintendence, in the hands of them, who have been the companions, or the witneſſes, or perhaps the objects, of his ſpiritual labours. Conſcious of his imperfections, he pleads no merits with thoſe whom he prays to be the Protectors of his Widow and the Guardians of his Children: he truſts to that benevolence, which, in humble imitation of the divine, regards with indulgence the feeble efforts of human virtue; and, while it embalms "with double honour[y]" the memory of the more deſerving, is not inſenſible to the ſervices, or to the wants, of any.

You, who are pleaſed to undertake this charitable office, are rewarded in the inſtinctive pleaſure which every one receives, when he obeys the good propenſities of his nature: you are rewarded in the applauſe of your reaſon and conſcience; and in the approbation of Heaven. You are doing "a good" unbounded "to the "houſehold of faith;" "diſperſing" benefits

[y] 1 Tim. 5. 17.

" abroad," of which you cannot aſcertain the nature or the extent; more important probably, than your humility will allow you to hope; more ample perhaps, than, in this world, you will ever know. Contributing to the ſubſiſtence or education of ſome Orphan whom you ſhall never ſee, you may be raiſing up a bleſſing to ſome ſinking family; an exemplary member to the lower, or middle, orders of ſociety; or even an ornament to the higheſt: above all, you may be reſcuing him, as yet uninſtructed and unpolluted, from ignorance, from error, from temptation; and, whatever may be his ſtation or his influence on earth, you may lead him in the way to heaven. At the leaſt, you are relieving a preſent diſtreſs, in ſituations in which it is felt moſt keenly: in the houſe of mourning: in families, which have loſt at once the object of their affections and the means of their ſupport: in thoſe who have ſeen better days; to whom the evil of contracted circumſtances is aggravated by ſudden degradation, and habits of life not eaſily forgotten: who are cut off from many ordinary reſources, by the infirmities of age, or the imbecillity of ſex or youth; in ſome caſes, by a ſentiment, of which no one will be diſpoſed to judge ſeverely, ariſing from a conſciouſneſs of birth

and education not ill-ſuited to more proſperous fortunes: who, in a word, depend, the aged for their annual ſubſiſtence, the young for their education alſo and their hopes in life, upon Your care and patronage: who will receive "the fruits of your liberality,[z]" as the effuſion of a humane and charitable heart; as a benefaction from their country to diſtreſſed citizens; as a bleſſing, conveyed to them by your miniſtry, from Heaven.

[z] 2 Cor. 9. 10.

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